

New York Opening

'Veronica's Room' Is Mystery to Audience

By WILLIAM GLOVER
AP Drama Critic

NEW YORK — Suspense fiction's old reliable, the psychopathic killer, strikes again in "Veronica's Room," an ultra-terse teaser which premiered in Broadway's Music Box.

The jigsaw pattern of Ira Levin's concoction is fairly simple, employing only four performers. The main gimmick to keep communicants on the edge of their pews is figuring out just who is doing what to whom. It verges at times on Gothic versions of the famous baseball laugh routine by Abbott and Costello about who's on first.

Levin, author of "Rosemary's Baby" and other gaspers, packs this caper into 70 minutes of actual stage action, stretched out by one of those interminable intermissions that feature ballet performances. Come to think of it, this is a pretty delicate dance of malevolent mischief.

The talented player quartet squeezes the ultimate essence out of every kinky clue and behavior twist. Eileen Heckart and Arthur Kennedy enact an elderly couple at the start, Regina Baff and Kipp Osborne an apparently baffled young pair picked up by them in a Boston bean joint.

The greyhairs ask them over to help exorcise ghosts of ancient evil a-prowl in an old nearby mansion. Then identities tangle into a berserk snarl. Further detailing of events would betray the canons of mystery reviewing.

Other critics:

Clive Barnes, New York Times — "The play is strong on atmosphere and totally weak in reality. It shouts a lot but means little."

Douglas Watt, Daily News — "I'm still not sure just exactly what happened."

Richard Watts, New York Post — "Too mysterious for its own good."

Other plays:

"The Indian Experience" in off-Broadway's Playhouse 2—A history-culture synopsis that belongs in a lecture hall. John Kauffman, an earnestly smiling young man of mixed Nez Perce Indian and German ancestry, co-assembled the script and does most of the performing. He grew up on an Idaho reservation.

The scrapbook melange was done previously in Seattle.

The program wanders from aboriginal myth to census statistic, from the sayings of eminent chieftains to the pronouncements of current politicians, back to Columbus in 1492 and up to Wounded Knee in 1973.

Other critics:

Mel Gussow, New York Times — "... the passages are repetitive and, at times, inflated. The manner of the presentation is stiff and untheatrical."

Jerry Tallmer, New York Post — "... it is not my idea for theater ... a nice show for students perhaps, if they seek reaffirmation without drama."

Hit-Run Victim Is Still Critical

A Buffalo postal worker remains in serious condition in Emergency Hospital today as Hit & Run Squad detectives searched for the driver of a car which ran him down at Lovejoy and Ideal Sts. early Wednesday.

Police said Alfred A. Monaco, 47, of 74 Vanderbilt St., apparently stopped near the intersection just after midnight to load four discarded cushions into his car trunk for use on a couch remodeling project.

As he walked from behind the car to resume driving to work, he was hit by another vehicle and suffered a severely fractured skull.